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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-fourth session
Items 4, 7 and 12 of the provisional agenda

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES, INCLUDING PALESTINE

THE RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION AND ITS APPLICATION TO PEOPLES UNDER COLONIAL OR ALIEN DOMINATION OR FOREIGN OCCUPATION

RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND RELATED INTOLERANCE

Letter dated 6 February 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights

It has regrettably come to our attention that the Palestinian Observer has absolutely no intention of retracting the anti-Semitic slur which he made in the course of the fifty-third session of the Commission on Human Rights last year. Apparently, he does not even begin to comprehend the nature, let alone the depth, of the offence that he gave to Israel and, at the same time, to the Jewish people at large, when he revived the centuries' old "Blood Libel" and accused Israel and, in effect, Jews, of trying to kill non-Jewish children - in this case, Palestinian children - by injecting them with the HIV (AIDS) virus.

The Commission on Human Rights has defined anti-semitism as a form of racism. The Secretary-General of the United Nations has openly critized the Palestinian Observer for making the above-mentioned remark, commenting that any speaker in United Nations debates making unsubstantiated comments of such a nature should be called to order. You, yourself, rejected the Palestinian Observer's false allegations in your letter of 21 March 1997.

That forthright letter has not yet been placed square on the record of the Commission on Human Rights. I would request therefore that that letter be circulated, under cover of the present letter, as an official document under items 4, 7 and 12 on the provisional agenda of the fifty-fourth session of the Commission.

(Signed) Yosef LAMDAN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

LETTER DATED 21 MARCH 1997 FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE FIFTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS TO THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ISRAEL TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT GENEVA

Thank you very much for your letter dated 17 March 1997 relating to a statement made at the fifty-third session of the Commission on Human Rights. I fully understand your concern as to the charge made against your country by the Palestinian Observer Ambassador Ramlawi in his statement delivered on 11 March 1997, saying that 300 Palestinian children have been recently injected by Israel with the HIV (AIDS) virus.

As Chairman of the current session of the Commission and representative of a country protecting and promoting democracy, human rights and a fair political dialogue, I share your feeling about such a serious allegation made without evidence, on the basis of a newsaper article. From the context of the situation and information generally available I assume that the speaker should be aware of the fact that these allegations have been proved completely false.

This unfortunate case reminds me of a very similar allegation made towards your country in 1991 in the Commission on Human Rights. Already at that time my predecessor, the Chairman of the forty-seventh session of the Commission, expressed the conviction that declarations provoking racist or discriminatory sentiments must not be tolerated in the Commission.

I fully share this opinion and personally strongly reject such a way of argumentation in the discussions of the Commission. It is my view that a statement of that kind cannot remain without an appropriate reaction.

As requested, your letter has been circulated as an official document of the Commission (E/CN.4/1997/122). I have arranged with the secretariat that my reply to your letter will also be circulated as an official document of the Commission.

(Signed) Miroslav SOMOL
Chairman of the fifty-third session
of the Commission on Human Rights